

Safety On The Road

Be A Designated Driver Not A Drunk Driver

Most people know that drinking and driving do not mix. Alcohol is a factor in at least half of highway deaths. Almost all areas have laws against drunk driving. Most laws are based on blood alcohol levels and driving behavior.

Sometimes, including at company and private parties or celebrations, laws can be easily forgotten. Alcohol gives a false sense of confidence and well-being. Under its influence, people may think they are capable of driving competently.

This false sense of relaxation occurs after a few drinks because the first part of the brain to be affected by alcohol controls attitude and judgment. It becomes difficult to make sensible, safe decisions.

Why people cannot drive as well drunk as sober is because the second part of the brain to be anesthetized by alcohol controls voluntary movement. The more alcohol a person drinks, the more judgment and reaction time become impaired.

Under the influence of alcohol, a driver's concentration is impaired because of drowsiness. Double vision and blurring occur. This reduces side vision, making it

hard to see vehicles approaching from either side.

Only time eliminates alcohol from the system. The amount of time required to sober up depends on how much the person has had to drink, how much the person weighs, the type of drink, how fast the beverage was consumed, the drinker's mood, and the amount of food in the stomach.

Showers, fresh air, coffee and exercise will not sober you up. Only time does. The more drinks consumed, the more time it takes to sober up.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind if one is inclined to drink:

- Set a limit on the number of drinks consumed if driving afterwards is necessary. Try nursing one drink all evening, interspersed with non-alcoholic drinks.
- Food eaten before and during drinks helps to absorb the alcohol.
- If a lot of drinking during an occasion is planned, arrange for a designated driver to do the driving, take public transportation or a cab.

- To protect your own life, never drive with a person who has been drinking.

When you organize a party, here are some ideas for getting everyone home safely:

- Arrange designated drivers before the party starts.
- Serve other beverages besides alcohol.
- Serve high protein food such as cheese snacks.
- Plan party activities that do not center around drinking.
- Close the bar an hour before the party ends and serve non-alcoholic beverages and snacks.
- Prevent intoxicated guests from driving.

A few hours of sleep after a night of heavy drinking will not sober you up. You are still drunk and should not be driving.

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